

# MISSOURI CONSERVATION *Employee* SHOWCASE

## Sarah Szachnieski Resource Conservationist, Warren County

**S**arah Szachnieski likes horses. She also likes her job as an NRCS resource conservationist in Warren County, Missouri. So finding a way to incorporate her interest in horses into her job seemed only natural. It also helped address an environmental concern in an area that has quite a few people who keep two or three horses on just a few acres.

“The impact that four horses have on two acres can be a lot greater than the impact that 10 cows have on 10 acres,” Szachnieski says. “Horses can negatively impact the watershed the same way as the livestock do.”



Szachnieski started her career as a co-op student in 1997. When she graduated, she was employed full-time as a soil conservationist serving Warren and Montgomery counties. The district conservationist for those counties gave Szachnieski permission to develop a plan to work with horse owners.

One of the things Szachnieski did was to work with the soil and water conservation districts to secure grants to fund informational programs and hire speakers. The office has used those grants to host one program each year since 2000.

“The information for addressing resource concerns is the same for horses as it is for cattle,” she says. “The difference is that people who have horses have them as a hobby and the people who have cattle have them as a business.”

Since Szachnieski also serves as the State Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator, as coordinator of the East Central Grazing School, and as acting coordinator of the Gateway Resource Conservation and Development Council in addition to her duties as resource conservationist, job variety is not an issue.

But her work with horse owners is what she enjoys most.

“My accomplishment that I am most proud of is coordinating educational programs for horse owners in our FOSA and surrounding counties to help landowners make environmentally sound horse-keeping decisions,” she says.

When she's not working, Szachnieski likes scrapbooking and spending time with her husband Jason and their two young children. And of course there's her horses. Szachnieski has two horses of her own, which she rides in shows in the St. Louis area. Not surprisingly, her parents' home in Foristell, where Szachnieski and her mother keep their horses, has been set up and is managed using Horses For Clean Water Guidelines.

For Szachnieski, combining work with pleasure is not limited to the office.